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AUTHOR Zhang-Da, Yao
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ABSTRACT

Sparetime education has been developed in the Shanyang People's Commune to accomplish three major tasks. These are to wipe out illiteracy among the young and middle-aged, to disseminate knowledge about society and about agricultural technology, and to train personnel with knowledge in various social, economic, and technological fields. To meet the various demands and different learning conditions of the receivers of sparetime education (adults engaged in farm work or other jobs), sparetime education has the following specific features: learning is combined with reality and is for the purpose of application, education adopts varied forms, and measures are taken to inspire enthusiasm for learning. Anti-illiteracy programs are of two types--winter classes, sparetime schools, and literacy groups or short-term classes. Sparetime middle schools are intended to raise the cultural level of those who have achieved literacy. Sparetime polytechnical schools offer vocational training. These lessons have been learned: sparetime education must base its objectives on needs and the possibility of their achievement; it must be an undertaking of the people; there must be a coherence of knowledge; and sparetime education and full-time schooling must be considered as a whole. (YLB)

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SPARETIME EDUCATION IN SHANYANG PEOPLE'S COMMUNE
(People's Republic of China)

YAO ZHANG-DA

Life-Long Education Unit, ED/SCM

Unesco, Paris

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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The educational history of a Chinese commune allows us to understand the complexity of the implementation of life-long education policies and their relationships with the social, economic, technical and cultural transformations of a country.

The development of basic education in this commune has been associated with a strong initiative in the field of adult education which has the following objectives:

1. to wipe out illiteracy among young and middle-aged people;

2. to disseminate knowledge about society and agricultural technology;

3. to train personnel with special knowledge in various fields (social, economic, technological).

These educational activities were characterized by the strong participation of the community, the state funds being very limited (most of them are engaged in basic education).

An educational methodology has been developed, taking into account the specific characteristics of adult education in relation to the different activities (literacy, adult education at primary and secondary level, polytechnical school for adults, adult education through radio, film, television, leisure, self-learning).

This historical presentation shows us the engagement of the local population for mass educational action, which has permitted the eradication of illiteracy among youth and adults below 45, to enhance the level of social and scientific knowledge, to train administrative cadres and managerial personnel.

This commune is located in a country which had in 1980 about 146,600,000 children in primary school (approximately 90 per cent of the relevant school age population) and about 60,250,000 adolescents in secondary education. At the same time the Chinese authorities are fighting in order to develop adult education for workers of the industrial sector who have not completed secondary education (70 to 80 per cent) as well as for workers of the industrial sector (5 per cent) and for peasants (30 per cent) who are still illiterate (estimations for 1980).

The author, Yao Zhang-Da, is the Director of the Department of Workers and Peasant Education of the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Sparetime Education in Shanyang People's Commune

The Shanyang People's Commune of Jinshang County lies on the coast of the Bay of Hangzhou, more than 60 kilometres to the southwest of Shanghai. To the south it faces the sea and to the southwest it adjoins the ancient town of Jinshangwei, where the Shanghai Petrochemical General Plant, one of China's recently built industrial enterprises, is located. The commune covers an area of about 10 square kilometres, with a total population of 33,400, 92 per cent of which are engaged in agriculture. The People's commune is an administrative branch of the government as well as an organization of economy and production while the production brigade and the production team are the grass-root units directly responsible for organizing production under the leadership of the commune. The Shanyang People's commune consists of three towns, i.e. Shanyang, Weidongmen of Jinshang and Jinshangzui, and 19 production brigades, which are further divided into 160 production teams. The town of Shanyang is the seat of the office of the commune, and in the town there are shops, schools, public places of entertainment, a commune hospital and some commune-run factories.

The Shanyang People's Commune is connected with Shanghai and Hangzhou by both a highway and a railway while a special bus line links it with the county town. The rivers and creeks in this area, totalling about a hundred and flowing into the Huangpu River, constitute an efficient network of irrigation and flood-draining and provide a rich water resource and convenient waterway communication. Crisscrossed by rivers, creeks and estuaries and carpeted by flourishing crops and green trees, the smooth land of this area presents a scene characteristic of the countryside of Southern China. Overwintering crops of the commune are mainly rye, barley and wheat while a certain amount of clover and broadbeans is also grown. Every year when winter changes into spring, large stretches of rape blossoms and wheat seedlings form a beautiful picture of golden yellow and fresh green. The autumn crops here are mainly rice and cotton while fruit and vegetables are also grown. Every year in early summer, the sun-bathed farmland will send out a refreshing fragrance peculiar to young crops.

However, in the days before the founding of New China, the local people, whose ancestors had been creators of a highly civilized kingdom in ancient times, lived an extremely miserable life under the dark reactionary rule, and the natural environment of this area suffered terrible damages. There were neither a railway nor a highway in the whole area and most of the river courses were silted up because of long disrepair. Much of the farmland lay in waste and was overgrown with weeds. The production level was low and the peasants lived in hunger and cold. And as a result of corruption in politics and poverty in economy, culture and education here were extremely backward. In the whole area of Shanyang there were only 14 schools with a 4-year course or a 6-year course. The majority of the local people were deprived of the opportunity to go to school and remained illiterate. According to incomplete statistics of 1951, out of the 3,388 children aged from 7 to 15, there were only 890, 26.3 per cent, who were enrolled in schools. And out of the 7,922 grown-ups aged from 16 to 45, 7,288 were illiterate or semi-illiterate, making up 92 per cent of the total. As for the people over 46, the percentage of illiterates was even greater. Backwardness in culture and education in turn resulted in ignorance, superstitious outlook and negligence of hygiene.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a land reform was carried out in Shanyang. In 1956, 23 agricultural co-operatives were set up. Freed from the yoke of small-scale peasant economy, the local peasants embarked on the road of collectivization for common prosperity. A diversified collective economy comprising farming, sideline production and industrial production began to develop. The local people were no longer so hard up as they had been in pre-liberation days but became more than self-sufficient in food grain. In 1979, the average per mu yield of grain

reached 1,617.5 jin, about 8 times that in 1949; the per mu yield of ginned cotton reached 159.7 jin, about 9 times that in 1949; and the per mu yield of rape seeds reached 307.5 jin, about 5 times that in 1949. In 1949 there was almost no industry or sideline occupation here, but in 1979, the output value of industrial and sideline production reached 12.4487 million yuan, a 55.2 per cent of the total output value of the commune.

With the continuous development of production, the livelihood of the people improved year by year. In 1979, out of the total output value of 22.6258 million yuan, 4.127 million was set aside as the collective funds and 9,2460 million distributed to the commune members. The average income per family was 1,140 yuan and the average income per capita, including the earnings from the private plots and family sideline production, reached more than 300 yuan.

In the past few yars, out of the total number of more than 8,700 families, 6,000 have either built new houses or renovated their old ones. Some have even built storeyed houses. Each and every family now owns on an average two or three such facilities as wrist-watches, bicycles, sewing-machines, radio sets and television sets and most of the families have bank-savings and grain to spare.

Liberated politically and economically, the local people now enjoy a right to various types of education.

Accessible to all the school-aged children, there are now in the commune one 5-year course middle school, four 3-year course junior middle schools and twenty 5-year course primary schools. As for the adults who are already engaged in productive labour, they can receive sparetime education in various manners. With the development of full-time school education and sparetime education, the educational level of the local people has been continuously raised. Out of the 14,007 grown-ups aged from 16-45 in Shanyang, 1,484, at 10.5 per cent of the total, have received a senior-middle-school or a more advanced education, 2,871, a 20.4 per cent of the total, have received a junior-middle-school education, 3,697, a 26.4 per cent of the total, have received a higher-primary-school education, and 4,687, a 33.4 per cent of the total, have received a lower-primary-school education. The rate of illiterates and semi-illiterates has been reduced to a mere 9 per cent.

The popularization of education has in turn greatly helped to liven up the cultural life of the local people. Many peasants can now not only read, write and perform mathematical calculation but also play music, sing songs and perform plays and operas. Apart from many short and simple pieces, the Cultural Troupe of Shanyang has also put on two full-length modern plays, "The White-Haired Girl" and "Liu Hulan". And the recently established Ensemble of Shaoxing Opera of Shanyang has put on some classic operas, such as "The Peacocks Fly to the Southeast" and "A Story about Gratitude and Hatred". In the one year of 1979, the film projection team of the commune, which owns two 16 mm. projectors, gave as many as 1,713 film showings, with an audience of 849,361 person-times. Loudspeakers for wired broadcasting have been installed both in the fields and in the houses of the commune members. After work, the peasants can listen to news reports and technical lectures as well as learn songs by radio. The tea-houses, which used to be gamble dens before liberation, have become places where old peasants and retired workers can enjoy story-telling performances while drinking tea. Sports have also become very popular among the local people. Athletes of the Shanyang Commune attended the Third National Games and won banners and certificates of merit. "Yesterday's haven of sea-shore barbarians, today's home of culture. This is what people say of the tremendous changes that have taken place in the Shanyang People's Commune.

A Serious Historic Task

Following the victorious conclusion of the people's democratic revolution in 1949, the people in Shanyang area began to build a new edifice on the ruin, while there were numerous things to be done, how to develop education posed a serious historic task.

1. Hard facts

Being uneducated, the peasants often fell victims to feudal superstitions and feudal moral concepts.

One stormy summer day in the early fifties, Lu Peibao, a teenage girl in Wengmiao Village, was doing needlework in the centre room of her home when a sudden lightning struck her down to the ground. Her skin was burnt in many places and blisters quickly arose. Believing this to be a punishment meted out by Heavenly God because she had beaten her younger brother the other day, her panicstricken mother forced her to kneel on the ground in the open. So Lu Peibao knelt on the ground for several days, with the result that the blisters became seriously inflamed and festered.

What happened to Jin Shuzhang, a woman peasant of Wengjia Village, may also serve as a useful warning. As it happened, her three daughters developed encephalitis B in succession. Believing this to be the work of some evil spirit, she managed to borrow some money and bought some incense and candles and a lot of meat and fish to offer to the buddhas in the temple. She fussed about in this way for more than a month, only to find that, instead of getting better, her daughters became worse and worse and finally died one after another. After their death, she sent for a diviner to ascertain the cause of her ill-fortune. And the diviner, pointing to a pile of rubble behind the house, claimed that her daughter died because this house was smitten by some evil spirit, and to avoid another disaster, she had to pull down the house and move somewhere else. Consequently, Jin and her husband pulled down the house with great sorrow and built another. However, not long after this was done, Jin and her husband and her two remaining children fell ill too. Fortunately, now the local government learned about this and immediately sent some doctors to them. It was only after the doctors told them the true cause of their disease was the infection of a certain kind of germs that they began to awake to the fact that they had been stupidly duped. Then they soon recovered after receiving medical treatment in the hospital.

Being uneducated, the peasants were unable to break away from conservative thinking and slow in accepting new techniques; and some were even biased against them.

When the first lot of phosphate fertilizer since liberation was allotted to production team 4 of Gonnong Production Brigade, the peasants there, judging by its colour, refused to believe it to be of any use and piled it in the storehouse without using it. Some time later, they simply dumped the whole lot as rubbish on the river bank when they cleaned the storehouse. It was only when they found the fertilized grass on the bank flourishing quicker than ever before that they began to believe in the effect of chemical fertilizers.

Unable to read the names of different kinds of pesticides, some peasants had to identify them by their colour and smell. And great harm was often done to crops just because they failed to use the correct dosage of pesticides in eliminating pests. The peasants of production team 4 of Haiguang Brigade once raised a havoc with 40 mu of late rice crops by spraying on them an over-densened insecticide solution. Looking at this large expanse of blighted rice crops, which had caused them so great pains but now would not yield a single grain, the team leader could not help bitterly crying. Due to ignorance of the functions and mechanism of the farm machines, many operators could not operate them skilfully, let alone do repairing work. Shuguang Brigade once owned a high-pressure sprayer. But before they had used it for one year, they had to spend as much as 500 yuan on its maintenance, which was equal to the price of the machine.

One day, a commune member by the name of Zhang Meimei got an electric shock when switching off the light. Instead of cutting off the electricity supply, Su Jingeng, who happened to stand just beside him, reached out his hands to pull him and therefore was shocked too. It was only because some other person cut off the electricity supply in good time that a disaster was fortunately avoided.

Being uneducated, many cadres met with numerous difficulties in their work.

Yang Huolong used to be a township cadre in the early years after liberation. Every time when he attended a meeting held on the regional or the county level, he could only take notes by using some simple symbols and signs recognizable only to himself. When he came back to the town to communicate what was discussed at the meeting, which often lasted for two or three days, his speech would last only the time needed to smoke a cigarette, with a lot left out. Therefore, meetings always meant worries to him.

When the co-operative of Huali Village was set up, there was no one who knew how to record workpoints properly. So it was decided that each peasant would record his own workpoints and declare the results at regular intervals. Thus many peasants had to record their workpoints by putting soyabeans in a vessel. But as it happened, the soyabeans were often eaten by mice and errors were therefore inevitable. Then they had to give up this method and tried the method of tying knots on a rope, with each knot for a workpoint. Though this method was more reliable, it was too troublesome. Since a proper workpoint recorder was so badly needed, the co-operative invited a young man from a town many li away to do the job. However, the young man did not work long before he quitted, considering the job unpromising. After that, the peasants had to call on a monk in a monastery to be their accountant.

Lack of education also brought about difficulties in the everyday life of the peasants. Owing to illiteracy, many peasants could not read the names of places, streets and commodities when they went to town to do shopping. Some were even swindled because they failed to identify various coupons or tickets.

There was an old woman peasant who went to the market to sell a big hen. At the market, a swindler came up to her and struck up a conversation with her. When he found out that she was illiterate, he offered to barter a pad of "food coupons" for her hen. It was not until she was back home and showed the "coupons" to her son that she found she was swindled and the "coupons" the man gave her were actually some cigarette trade marks. But now she could do nothing but bitterly curse the swindler and blame herself for being illiterate.

As the uneducated peasants had no medical knowledge, they had no idea of what harm germs might cause. When they got a cut on the skin, they would often apply some mud or cobweb to it, muttering: "Today I put to my skin some mud and tomorrow the wound would be healed." They believed this to be the best way to heal the wound. However, instead of being healed, the wound would in most cases become worse owing to bacterial infection.

2. Objects to be attained

Numerous hard facts proved to the cadres and members of the Shanyang People's Commune that in order to develop production and improve their livelihood, they must master knowledge. And to attain this object, sparetime education must be developed. In view of the great percentage of illiteracy and the low educational level of the local peasants left over by old society, sparetime education must accomplish three major tasks.

1. To wipe out illiteracy among the young and middle-aged people.

Although the working people were the creators of history and culture, they were deprived of the right to culture and education in old China. Education was always a privilege of the upper classes whereas workers and peasants and their children were excluded from schools.

After liberation, education began to develop gradually and the number of students from worker and peasant families increased year by year. However, hindered by a backward economy left over by old society, education could not possibly advance at a very fast speed. It was then impossible for the state to provide a primary education for every school-aged child and the existing educational institutions and equipment could hardly satisfy the actual needs. In some remote rural areas, there was no school whatsoever. And since some peasants were still very poor and had a big family to support, their children had to help lighten their financial burden by taking part in productive labour. Therefore, many school-aged children either did not go to school or had to leave school before graduation. Besides, since the means of agricultural production were still quite primitive and most of the farm work was done by hand in the old way, the peasants did not feel education was an urgent matter. Still fettered by the old conception characteristic of small-scale peasant economy, they were concerned only about their immediate interests and failed to realize what an important role cultural and scientific knowledge might play in developing modern agriculture. Since people without schooling could earn a living just the same by relying on old experience and old methods, they preferred to let their children go in for farm work rather than send them to school. As a result, every year there were many children who would leave school. And with the scarce schooling as they had, they would soon become illiterate or semi-illiterate owing to negligence of study. Consequently, the anti-illiteracy task became even harder. Apart from the illiterates left over from old society, there were many new illiterates to teach.

2. To disseminate knowledge about society and knowledge about agricultural technology.

Before liberation, the agricultural economy of Shanyang area was based on private ownership of means of production and individual farming, with each family being the basic unit of production. The peasants carried on production on a very small scale on their small plots of land and the tools they used were very primitive. Hence the inevitable low level of production. After liberation, the local government made great efforts to improve the production mode and to organize the individual producers. In the early period after liberation, mutual-aid teams, a collective organization consisting of several or more than ten households, were set up. Several years later, the mutual-aid teams merged into co-operatives. And in 1958, people's communes were established, with a production capacity more than ten times greater than that of the co-operative. As a result of the change in production system, the application of new production techniques and the establishment of a co-operative human relationship, agricultural production began to develop rapidly. And this in turn promoted the development of industries, sideline occupations and fishery. The former one-sided agricultural economy gradually developed into a diversified economy comprising farming, sideline production and industrial production. This new situation called for a higher level of culture and science on the part of the peasants. Spare-time education for the peasants therefore should no longer confine itself to the elimination of illiteracy. Instead, it should further raise the educational level of the peasants and make the education on production know-hows and social knowledge one of its major tasks.

Education on social knowledge first of all means education on politics and current affairs. While carrying on a literacy education among the peasants, it is

also imperative to help them understand the laws, decrees and policies of the government so as to raise their socialist consciousness and make them play a more effective role in political and economic activities. Secondly, it means an education on social morality and social customs. The aim of this kind of education is to help the peasants to break away from the backward feudal concepts that have been shaped over a long period of time and make their way of life and conduct conform to collectivism and the civilized practice characteristic of new society, thus cultivating a general atmosphere of unity, mutual respect and mutual assistance. Thirdly, it means imparting to the peasants such knowledge as would be useful in their everyday life, e.g. the knowledge concerning hygiene and sanitation, family planning and child-care, with a view to helping them to pay more attention to hygiene, prevent diseases and improve their health.

Education concerning production consists of the two aspects of popularization and the raising of standard. Firstly, it means to popularize some general knowledge concerning production, with the aim of enabling the peasants to understand the whys and hows of their farm work and master the proper methods of labour so as to increase efficiency and improve quality. When some new technology is introduced, it is one of the tasks of sparetime education to acquaint the peasants with its essential features and requirements, including the necessary changes in farming systems, the adoption of new procedures and the introduction of new species of crops, new farming machines, new pesticides and new fertilizers. Secondly, it means to offer special courses and organize technical personnel to study scientific theories and advanced experience of other areas so that new measures and methods can be spread through them in accordance with local conditions. This kind of education plays an important role in developing production.

3. To train personnel with special knowledge in various fields

With constant renovations of means of production, the range and capacity of production have been greatly extended and the process of production is becoming more and more complicated. Hence the increasing need for more administrative and technical personnel and more educational, cultural and medical workers. However, although many new educational institutions have been set up since the birth of New China, they still can hardly satisfy the increasing needs in all these fields. In Shanyang there is not a single secondary school for vocational training and only very few technical personnel have been assigned to work in this area. Therefore, technical personnel badly needed in various fields can only be trained through sparetime education.

In the early days after liberation, the production mode in Shanyang was very backward and there was no technical personnel whatsoever. Since the establishment of the commune, the scope of production has been greatly extended and the number of tractors, threshers, fodder-grinders and machines for water-draining and irrigation has been continuously increased. As a result, over 95 per cent of the farming land of the commune is now ploughed and irrigated by machines. More and more chemical fertilizers and pesticides have been used in production and new techniques have been widely used in crop breeding, plant protection and plant cultivation. The commune has now set up an agrotechnical station while each brigade has organized an agrotechnical group and each production team has its own plant protectors, crop-breeders and farm-machine operators. Hence an agrotechnical network from the commune level down to the team level. This large contingent of agrotechnical personnel has been built almost entirely by the commune itself. Only four of them have received a secondary or more advanced training in state-run schools.

In 1949, there were only 4 small clinics with 4 doctors of traditional Chinese medicine in Shanyang. As for doctors of Western medicine and hospital beds, there were none at all. In 1958, the 4 clinics were integrated into a commune-run hospital with 15 beds. However, this still could hardly meet the need of the masses of peasants.

When some peasants in a remote village fell ill, they had to travel 7 or 8 li to see the doctor, and if they happened to suffer a serious disease, they had to be sent to the county town to receive medical treatment, which might mean a 50 li journey from the village. In 1969, co-operative medical stations were set up in all brigades and in five commune-run enterprises. And each production team had a health worker. The number of beds in the commune hospital increased to 45. Out of the total number of the doctors and nurses now working in the commune there are only 17 who are graduated from formal secondary medical schools and assigned here by the state. The rest, which make up 91 per cent of the total, are all trained through sparetime education.

In addition to training personnel with special knowledge in various fields, sparetime education also offers advanced courses to continuously raise their professional level. Since the correspondence training classes and short-term courses sponsored by the government can only admit a very small number of students, most of the professional personnel carry on their advanced study through local sparetime education. Apart from setting up sparetime technical schools, the commune also organizes some short-term courses and technical lectures from time to time to help the technical personnel to improve their professional ability so as to keep abreast with the development of society.

Varied Means of Education

In order to accomplish the serious historic task of educating peasants in their sparetime, varied means of education are adopted in accordance with the specific features of sparetime education.

Specific features of sparetime education

The receivers of sparetime education are adults engaged in farm work or other jobs. As a result of their various demands and different learning conditions, sparetime education has the following specific features:

1. Learning is combined with reality and is for the purpose of application.

The receivers of sparetime education are labourers directly engaged in farm work. In contrast with the youngster in full-time schools, they have in mind specific needs arising from their work and life when taking part in sparetime education. Therefore, what is taught and how it is taught must give expression to, and keep in touch with, the peasants' actual life, their work and their social surroundings, so as to arouse their interest in learning, deepen their understanding of what is taught and help them memorize lessons, thus enabling them to gain the knowledge which they most urgently need. The primer for literacy class, for example, is compiled in the principle of "proceeding from the near to the far". The first stage introduces the personal and place names in the village and the villages nearby, ... names of farm tools and farm work as well as the most frequently used words in their political and cultural life. The second stage contains texts written with words in common use and based on happenings in the local county, the province or elsewhere in the country. When agricultural co-operatives were initiated, some co-operatives compiled primers for work-point keeping, which teach co-operative members how to keep work-points every day, to fill in their work records and to write receipts, vouchers, IOU notes and other informal notes, and also introduce technical terms for agriculture. In technical education, attention is first given to local crops, local side-occupations, and the chemical fertilizers and farm chemicals in common use, and then to the gradual widening of the range of knowledge. Besides, as peasants have division of labour in their farm work and each type of work has different needs for knowledge in different sessions, sparetime schools have more flexible and diverse contents of learning than full-time schools which have youngsters as students.

2. Running sparetime schools must depend on the masses of the people and adopt varied forms

Sparetime education involves vast numbers of people and much amount of work; the number and distribution of sparetime schools should be determined in conformity with the characteristics of rural areas. In Shanyang in the early days after liberation sparetime schools were run by villages. In the period of co-operatives, they were run by co-operatives. With the birth of people's communes, sparetime schools are now run at three levels - the people's commune, the production brigades and the production teams respectively. Basically, sparetime schools have been set up to suit the actual needs of the peasants so that they are able to attend classes in their neighbourhood with convenience. Sparetime schools outnumber full-time schools but at present it is impossible for the state to allocate for sparetime schools so much fund as it does for full-time schools. Consequently, sparetime schools should make do with whatever is available, draw on local resources and rely on the masses in their management. As a result of reliance on the masses, problems such as the enlistment of teachers, school houses, equipment and funds are all solved and sparetime schools of all kinds are consolidated. Take the sparetime school of Chelu Production Team of Panku Production Brigade for an example. There were over thirty students there, who chose those who knew quite a few Chinese characters as their teachers, used the accountant's office as the classroom, painted a wall black and used it as the blackboard and made their own kerosene lamps to light up the classroom - in this way, the sparetime school was run better and better.

3. Take various measures to inspire the peasants' enthusiams for learning

Because of their high political consciousness, their bitter memory of being deprived of the right of schooling and their engagement in particular jobs, peasants and cadres of worker-peasant origin have more urgent needs and stronger willpower in learning than young people, which gives sparetime education a decided advantage. They say, "just as in fighting there is no stronghold that cannot be captured so in learning there is no knowledge that cannot be learned", "so long as you learn actively, do not worry about difficulty in understanding; so long as you learn earnestly, do not worry about being too dull to learn; so long as you make the best use of time, do not worry about being slow-witted; so long as you have made up your mind to learn, do not worry that the Chinese characters are too difficult". It is with such tenacity that they go in for learning. On the other hand peasants are occupied with farm work or other work. They can learn only in their sparetime and consequently they have little time for learning. Physical fatigue after strenuous labour adds to their difficulty. Above all, the Chinese characters, with their complex structures, look very much alike to an illiterate person just as anyone who sees machines for the first time finds them all alike and rather puzzling. The peasants, in short, meet with much difficulty. A few peasants became low-spirited and short of confidence in learning to the finish. Therefore the local government and educational workers, adopting varied forms in view of different cases, conducted thoroughgoing and painstaking ideological work among the peasants to encourage them to fight against illiteracy and uncivilized customs by themselves. Apart from their everyday teaching, the cadres and local teachers engaged in sparetime education pay frequent visits to peasants' homes to learn their difficulty in attending classes, which they helped to overcome, to help their students make up the lessons they had missed, to read newspapers and tell stories, and also write letters and notes for those who knew too few Chinese characters. When peasant women with young children to care for are attending literacy classes, makeshift nurseries are set up and literate girls are asked to babysit for them so that they can set their minds at rest. The wall newspapers in the sparetime schools and production teams often commend those students and local teacher who work hard and earnestly, and publicize their experience.

Every year the local government and various sparetime schools choose through public evaluating activists from among students as well as anti-illiteracy workers, and give them appropriate awards; they also select from time to time those peasants who have achieved remarkable successes in learning for administrative, technical, primary teaching and health work.

2. Flexible and varied teaching contents, forms and methods

In Shanyang, most of the receivers of sparetime education are peasants, but some staff members and workers in finance and commerce, as well as workers in factories run by the communes and production brigades also attend sparetime schools. They are different from each other in their particular types of work, posts, technical levels, cultural background and their wants from learning. There is also a wide gap in their ages. Sparetime education must adopt flexible and varied teaching contents, forms and methods to meet the needs of different people.

1. Anti-illiteracy

The purpose of anti-illiteracy is to teach the written language, i.e. to enable those peasants who know no or only very few Chinese characters to have a preliminary command of the written language so as to be delivered from the misery of illiteracy. The standards of literacy fixed by the state are: know how to read, write and use 1,500 everyday Chinese characters, able to read popular literature and periodicals and to write informed notes, short letters and simple articles. Any unit or area where over 80 per cent of the youths and adults (people from 16-45) are literate is considered to be basically illiteracy-free.

In light of the large number of illiterate people and their different conditions, classes of varied forms are set up.

The first kind is winter classes, sparetime schools and literacy groups.

During the slack winter seasons in the early years after the founding of the People's Republic, winter classes were organized within administrative villages. They represented the early stage of anti-illiteracy campaign. At that time peasants in Shanyang area grew two crops a year - padded rice and cotton, or wheat and rape seeds; as a result, there was a slack farming season in winter and early spring, which, lasting as long as three months, offered a favourable opportunity to organize peasants in learning. Many peasants who drew benefit from attending winter classes found the interval between slack seasons too long for them to learn much knowledge or even to remember what they had learned. Consequently under the voluntary demand from the peasant masses, a number of winter classes turned into permanent schools. During the three or four years round 1952, winter classes in most administrative villages gradually became peasants' sparetime schools. Acting on the principle of "learning much during the slack season, learning little during ordinary farming seasons and suspending classes during the busy season", sparetime schools doubled the teaching hours offered by winter classes, enlarged classes and improved the quality of teaching.

Peasants' sparetime schools are run by individual production teams. As production teams are rather big, usually made up of 70-80 households for smaller ones, which live scattered from each other and classes are generally held in evenings, young and middle-aged women busy with heavy household chores and elderly peasants find it inconvenient to attend classes. To help them carry on their learning, some sparetime schools organize those who live close to each other into literacy groups.

Winter classes, sparetime schools and literacy groups usually meet three evenings a week, or at day-time when the weather is unfavourable and the peasants cannot do farm work. The annual teaching hours are usually 300 hours. Their curricula include

not only the teaching of the written language, but also lectures on current affairs, popular science and technology; before and after classes, small-scale recreational and sports activities were carried out, making the classes lively and colourful. During the three to four years after 1963, the commune, summing up the experience in running sparetime schools for years, launched a campaign to ensure that every sparetime school has an amateur drama group, a newspaper reader, a story-teller, a blackboard newspaper, a book case and an experimental plot. Thus sparetime schools have become cultural and educational centres of production teams. Large numbers of young and middle-aged peasants spend their evenings in sparetime schools, where they enjoy rich and colourful cultural life as well as learn the written language and much knowledge about the society, farm work and science and technology in general. Attending sparetime schools now constitutes a major part in the peasants' sparetime.

The second kind is short-term literacy classes.

A considerable number of the administrative and technical personnel in the commune were also illiterate. To eliminate illiteracy among them speedily so that they could meet the needs of their work, short-term literacy classes were set up in slack farming seasons by the commune, production brigades or commune-run factories and other enterprises. They were sent there group after group at different times. Such classes are also run at the final stage in the anti-illiteracy campaign for those who have made slow progress or fallen behind. The short-term literacy classes usually last about a month. The students' loss of income caused by their absence from work is covered partly by the accumulation fund of the commune or production brigades and partly by the special fund allocated for sparetime education by the government. Their living expenses and stationery are paid by themselves. Those who attend classes run by the commune have their board and lodging in the commune while those of brigade-run classes are day students. In classes of this kind students have high mental concentration and achieve fast speed and good results in learning.

The above are the two main kinds of classes in the anti-illiteracy campaign in Shanyang. The teaching material is the "Peasants' Primer", compiled by the government, supplemented by material written by the commune to meet the actual needs.

In view of different conditions three teaching methods are used.

1. The lesson-by-lesson teaching method

The teaching method in common use in sparetime schools is to teach one lesson after another according to the sequence of the lessons in the "Peasants' Primer". In teaching each lesson, the procedure usually consists of three steps.

Step One: Teach the new characters and expressions (about 15 new characters for each lesson) with the aim of enabling the students to know, to read and to write them so as to remove language barrier in understanding the text. Make explanation and analysis, which must be vivid and easy to understand, of the more difficult and complex characters and expressions and be sure that the students know them well through repeated drills and exercises.

Step Two: Read and explain the text with the aim of enabling the students to read the text smoothly, fluently, do silent reading of the text, understand the story and message and retell the text.

Step Three: Review and do exercises. On the basis of the previous two steps, review and drill on the important and difficult language points and direct the students to do the exercises in the lesson. In the end give the students a quiz or a test to check on the results. Usually it takes four teaching hours (2 evenings) to teach a lesson.

2. The unit teaching method

Every two or three lessons in the "Peasants' Primer" make up a unit. "Unit teaching method" is to teach unit by unit, instead of lesson by lesson. This method is applicable to the sparetime schools where students are mostly young or easy to teach. The procedure followed in this method, consisting of three steps, is similar to that in "Lesson-by-lesson teaching method". What is different is that it follows the procedure by units, instead of by lessons. That means that the new characters and expressions in each unit are taught together and then the texts are taught one by one but with different emphases on each. After review and exercises give a quiz or test to check on the results of the teaching of all the lessons in the unit. Compared with "Lesson-by-lesson teaching method", "Unit teaching method" speeds up teaching and saves teaching hours.

3. Concentrated method of achieving literacy

The concentrated method of achieving literacy, based on the "unit teaching method" and the "quick method of achieving literacy", is an attempt to find out a good way to achieve literacy.

To apply the concentrated method of achieving literacy, Shanyang People's Commune compiled "A Handbook of Common Chinese Characters". According to their pronunciation in the local dialect and the complexity in their structures, 1,500 common Chinese characters are graded into five units. Unit One includes 156 very simple Chinese characters (e.g. 木, 人, 口). Each of them is composed of only one element which, besides being a word by itself, is used to form other more complicated Chinese characters (e.g. 杏, 松) and therefore acts as a character-forming element. A good command of these single-element characters facilitates the learning of other characters. Unit Two consists of 124 pictographic characters (e.g. 日, 月, 山) and the characters each of which is composed of two or more single-element characters and the meanings of which can be readily deduced from their component elements (e.g. 明, 休). Unit Three is 1,200 pictophonetic characters, with one element indicating the meaning and the other the sound (e.g. 抱, 芝, 固). Pictophonetic characters comprise 70 per cent of the total Chinese characters in common use. Knowledge acquired in the previous two units makes it easier for the students to understand and commit to memory the structures of the more complicated characters introduced in this unit. Unit Four aims at distinguishing the characters with the same pronunciation or similar structures. Unit Five is composed mainly of expressions and phrases with the view to teaching the students how to use more and more difficult characters.

The procedure of the "concentrated method of achieving literacy" consists of three steps.

Step One: New characters and expressions

Teach the new characters and expressions (which total 1,999, distributed in 66 lessons) in groups and lesson by lesson. The students should be able to read and write them correctly, know their meanings and have a good command of 1,500 characters.

Step Two: Reading

With the "Peasants' Primer" compiled in Shanghai and some essays as the reading material and under the direction of the teacher, students are organized to do a great deal of extensive reading, paying special attention to the representative texts.

Step Three: Sentence-making and writing

As is required by the anti-illiteracy campaign programme, review lessons are conducted and a large number of exercises, compiled with the exercises in the "Peasants' Primer" as reference, are done under the teacher's direction. Students are expected to be able to write informal everyday notes and simple, short articles. A general review and a test on literacy concludes the course.

Another method is teaching characters with the aid of real objects.

Adults have much experience in work and life; this favourable condition is taken advantage of. A label bearing the name is stuck on every piece of farm tools, furniture and household utensils so that people can learn the characters when they see the objects. This method of teaching combines the learning of characters with people's activity in production and daily life. Concrete objects remind the learner of the characters that he has been taught, and constant repetition strengthens the memory. In 1958 and 1959 people in every home and every trade in Shanyang were asked to write the name on every and each object they might see. On each door, for example, was stuck a label bearing the character "门" (meaning "door"). Every table and chair have their corresponding characters on them. Even on the jars of salt and soya-bean sauce in the grocer's were stuck labels bearing characters meaning "salt and soyabean sauce". Peasants write on their farm tools the respective names, e.g. "hoe", "plough", or "rake", and very good results were achieved. A woman in the Ni Family Village, by the name of Chang Yuebao, first learned the character meaning "door" and then when she closed the door, saw and learned the character meaning "bolt". She went on practising writing the characters and grew very much interested. In the beginning she learned 6 or 7 characters every day. By and by, making use of the rules governing the formation of Chinese characters, she learned quite a few characters in a very short period of time. Together with what she was taught in the sparetime school she managed to learn over 20 characters a day, with a record of 30 characters in one day. After a period of learning this mother of two children got rid of illiteracy and was able to read easy articles in periodicals. Those labels on real objects did play an introductory role in her learning.

The fourth form adopted in anti-illiteracy is to establish teacher-learner partnership.

As peasants sometimes do not have fixed work schedule and they often live quite far apart from each other, teacher-learner partnership is formed to help those peasants who find it impossible to attend regular classes.

A teacher-learner partnership is made up of a teacher and one or more students.

Specific objectives are set forth respectively for the teacher and the learner (or learners), both of whom pledge themselves to achieve them. The "teacher" is anyone who knows the written language; even school-children are called upon to act as "little teachers".

The learners in "teacher-learner partnership" are mostly housewives who are always busy with housework as well as farmwork. Though eager to learn, they are burdened by the caring of children and are unable to attend classes in sparetime schools. It is for these women that "teacher-learner partnership" is formed and coaching at home is carried out. A "teacher-learner partnership" usually involves four or five people from one family or several neighbouring families, with two or three teachers who guarantee to teach well. Teaching is conducted at any free time without fixed timetable. People of various family relations enter into the partnership - husband teaching wife, children teaching parents, younger brothers or sisters teaching elder brothers or sisters, and so on.

"Teacher-learner partnership" is popular among peasants; they are very enthusiastic about it. When the anti-illiteracy campaign was in full swing, 1,000 commune members entered into partnerships of this kind in Wengmiao Village and remarkable results were achieved. Du Muyuan was quite illiterate before he formed a "teacher-learner partnership" with his fiancee, who was a graduate from a normal school. As a result of two years' efforts, Du learned nearly 2,000 characters and now works as the grainstore keeper in the production team. Jin Shuzhen, a woman of 45, was taught by her daughter and achieved literacy in four years. Ten years ago when both her children could read fluently and write with ease she did not know a single Chinese character. Using her daughter's Grade Two Reader as the textbook, she formed a "teacher-learner partnership" with her eight-year-old daughter. She covered three lessons every week. Every evening she learned ten characters, pronouncing and writing them repeatedly and early every morning she reviewed her lessons. She was not discouraged by the difficulties she met with in the beginning and worked out ways to learn Chinese characters. She practised writing characters even before she fell asleep. After assiduous work she finished six readers used by pupils of Grades 1-3 in the elementary school. With 2,000 characters at her command, she can read some newspapers and popular literature, take down the subject matter at a meeting and write letters.

2. Sparetime primary schools and middle schools (six-year schools and nine-year schools)

The major task of sparetime primary schools is to raise the cultural level of those who have achieved literacy but have not finished the courses of primary and middle schools so as to lay the cultural foundation for further education in science and technology.

(i) Sparetime high primary schools (six-year schools)

In 1965 many production brigades and teams in Shanyang People's Commune set up high primary schools, with an enrolment of 800 students, only fewer than literacy classes. Owing to the interference and sabotage by the "Gang of Four" during the Cultural Revolution sparetime schools were closed after 1968, so were high primary schools. Under strong demand from the masses sparetime education was resumed in the mid-1970s. But the attendance rate of school age children was low and even those who attended schools often discontinued their schooling. Consequently there were new illiterate people. The educational authorities in Shanyang had to focus their attention on anti-illiteracy and high primary schools could not be placed on the order of the day. With the accomplishment of anti-illiteracy in late 1979, the development of sparetime high primary schools came to be the major work of sparetime education in Shanyang. Up to now 19 sparetime high primary schools have been set up in the commune and they are still developing.

The students in the sparetime high primary schools are mostly young people. They have classes three evenings a week and also on rainy or snowy days in winter. The period of schooling is two or three years. At present the curricula include Chinese and mathematics. Students are required to finish three Chinese textbooks and a mathematics textbook and are expected to attain in the two subjects the educational level of graduates of national five-year primary schools.

(ii) Sparetime middle schools (nine-year schools)

The curricula of sparetime middle schools include Chinese, mathematics, physics and chemistry. Students are required to finish all the courses and are expected to pass an examination which certifies that the examinee has attained the educational level of graduates of full-time junior middle schools. Sparetime middle schools are taught by teachers of full-time middle schools. Students are selected from production brigades and factories and other enterprises run by the commune and production brigades.

3. Sparetime polytechnical schools

Shanyang People's Commune seriously lacked technical personnel in agriculture, industry, and side-occupations. In 1970 there was only one technician in all the 160 production teams who was a polytechnic school graduate and eight technicians who had studied in short-term training courses in polytechnic schools. In 1974 the commune boasted 1865 farm machines of various kinds and 1,200 operators were selected from among the peasants. Without necessary technical training behind them they neither understood the mechanism nor knew how to maintain the machines. Consequently farm machines often broke down; in only seven production teams as much as over 11,000 yuan was spent on maintenance and repair of the farm machines. Therefore sparetime polytechnical schools were in great demand from peasant masses. 1975 saw the founding of such a school which set out to train technical and management personnel in industry, side-occupations and medicine and public health, and also give training to technical and management personnel in active service. Students are expected to gain the essential knowledge of the special field and be able to operate the machines and work with skill and efficiency. The school offers courses in farm machinery, agrotechnique, medicine and public health, livestock husbandry and veterinary, and introduction to technology. From 1975 to 1979 this school has trained for production brigades and commune-run enterprises over 600 such junior technical personnel as farm machine operators, plant protectors, veterinarians and accountants, and for production team over 1,200 farm machine operators and stockmen. Among the 1,800 graduates 159 have attained the level of regular polytechnic school graduates, 1,291 are basically qualified to do their technical work and the remaining 300 can barely handle their work and are in need to continue with service training.

To meet the needs at different times, the authorities in Shanyang starts short-term technical or vocational courses from time to time to train personnel needed in various fields. At the time when the co-operative transformation of agriculture reached its high tide, a large number of accountants and other personnel needed in financial administration were trained and many peasants who had not long ago achieved literacy learned to calculate with an abacus and keep accounts. With a view to livening up cultural life in the countryside the commune ran short-term courses and attached special classes to full-time schools, to train amateur actors. A group of peasants, who used to know how to handle farm tools only, learned the A.B.C. about arts and literature, tunes from some local operas, the basic skills of drama and the playing of Chinese musical instruments. The commune also offered short-term courses in physical culture and organized athletes to go to the peasant masses to pass on knowledge about physical culture and coach them in basic skills, so as to build up the physique of the commune members. Besides, the commune has trained in various ways news reporters, rural wiremen, librarians, amateur writers, story-tellers and other personnel in special fields. According to incomplete statistics up to 1975 a total of 3,200 people had been trained.

4. Social education in other forms

(i) Wired-broadcasting network

With financial aid from the government a wired broadcasting station was built in 1958. Wired broadcasting came to be a form of sparetime education. In addition to relaying the Central Broadcasting Station and Shanghai Broadcasting Station, the commune wired broadcasting station arranges its own programmes, which include news reporting, lectures on science and technology, general knowledge about everyday life and farming, knowledge about meteorology and entertainment, with four transmissions every day. To reach a wide audience, loudspeakers have been installed in the fields and homes of commune members so that broadcasting programmes are heard everywhere. Through these programmes, vast numbers of peasants learn new habits and customs in the new society, current affairs in China and the world, as well as government policies, laws and decrees. They also study science and technology and increase their knowledge in general.

(ii) Films and television

Upon its founding Shanyang People's Commune set up a film projection team which had two 16 mm projectors. Films are frequently shown in the commune auditorium and the film projection team makes a circuit of production brigades. The commune now boasts over 300 television sets. More and more people are attending television middle school and television college. Films and television not only provide peasants with enjoyable artistic treat but also give them knowledge in various fields.

(iii) Culture centre

In the commune culture centre there are a library and a gallery; it is also where the sports team, amateur theatrical troupe and orchestra meet and have their practice or rehearsal. The library, with books on political science, science and technology, arts and literature, and education and also periodicals, is open to the public every day. The amateur Shaoxing Opera Troups has as their repertoire both classical dramas and modern dramas written by themselves. The orchestra and wushu[1] team often put on performances here. Laughter and cheers are heard from the commune floodlit basket ball court during competitions. The gallery displays newsphotos, stage photos and the day's newspapers; peasants doing shopping like to stop and linger before them.

(iv) Tea-house

People living in the rural areas south of the lower reaches of the Changjiang River like to drink tea in tea-houses in market towns, where before liberation gambling and opium-smoking were a common practice and feudalistic ideas, superstitions and vulgar interests spread unchecked. Now every tea-house has a story-telling theatre attached to it. Both the commune amateur theatrical troupe and professional story-tellers often present story-telling and ballad-singing there, or give other theatrical performances. Sometimes newspaper reading, lectures on science and technology, particularly on agrotechnique, are held there. The tea-house now also serves the purpose of peasant education.

In recent years self-study has become a common practice among many peasants. Some take correspondence courses offered by institutions of higher learning, some study independently middle school or college courses, and others persevere in self-study by reading professional publications. The two doctors of traditional Chinese medicine working in the commune hospital are examples of self-study. One of them was a senior middle school graduate and the other, formerly a barefoot doctor in a brigade, had the educational level of only a junior middle school student. Neither has attended any regular medical college. But they bought many medical publications which they read and studied intensively. Persisting in self-study for years, they became well versed in the theory of traditional Chinese medicine and accumulated rich clinical experience. After giving examinations the Shanghai Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine conferred them the title of Doctors of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The four middle-school and primary-school teachers who studied correspondence courses established by Shanghai Teachers' University worked with perseverance and all passed through the five courses in the Chinese Department.

(1) wushu: Traditional Chinese martial arts such as shadowboxing, sword playing, etc., formerly cultivated for self-defence, now a form of physical culture.

Tortuous Development

In the thirty years after the founding of the People's Republic, the development of sparetime education in Shanyang has by no means been plain-sailing; there have been serious setbacks as well as smooth development. It has undergone three periods: the 17 years after the founding of the People's Republic (1949-1966), the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the years after the downfall of the "Gang of Four" (1976-).

1. History of sparetime education in Shanyang

Immediately after the founding of the People's Republic the authorities in Shanyang, acting upon instructions from higher authorities and following the experience and practice traditional in the areas which had been liberated earlier, launched a vigorous campaign to set up winter classes under arduous conditions. Recalling their bitter personal experience of illiteracy in the old society, the broad peasant masses, still illiterate, regarded the right to learn in winter classes as a telling manifestation of their new position as masters of the country. They learned to read and write with intense eagerness. In the winter of 1950, all the 50 administrative villages in Shanyang ran their own winter classes, with 1,700 people attending. In response to the demand from the people winter classes began to turn in a planned way into perennial sparetime schools (or evening schools) in 1951. In 1965 there existed in the production teams, over 190 sparetime schools and classes of various kinds, which included illiteracy classes, high primary schools and a few senior middle schools. In the years before 1965 there had also been short-term literacy classes the participants of which were temporarily released from their regular work, short-term technical courses and lectures on science and technology. The majority of young and middle-aged peasants received sparetime education; statistics at the end of 1965 showed that as many as 3,800 people in the commune attended sparetime schools or classes in one way or another. Remarkable results were achieved in anti-illiteracy - illiteracy rate dropped from 92 per cent to about 20 per cent, with a number of former illiterate people attaining the educational level of graduates of full-time high primary schools or junior middle schools.

Owing to the interference of the "Gang of Four", sparetime education was devastated during the Cultural Revolution. In favour of "labourers without culture", they opposed peasants' studying culture and technology, vilifying it as "restoring revisionist educational line". Under the pretext of "serving politics", they turned sparetime schools, without exceptions, into "quotation-reciting and newspaper-reading political evening schools" where classes were organized in disregard to the students' different educational levels and the contents of teaching were all stereotyped. That resulted in people's loss of interest and very low attendance rate. Sparetime education existed only in name, and there came into being a large number of new illiterate people. Total literacy in Shanyang, which was about to come true, has to be postponed for nearly 10 years.

It was just at the time when the "Gang of Four" landed sparetime education in an extremely difficult position that starting from 1973 the cadres and members of Shanyang People's Commune ran great risks resuming step by step courses in general knowledge in the evening schools and conducting more than 40 short-term literacy classes during slack farming seasons. To meet the needs of the development of production, the commune started a sparetime polytechnical school in 1975. For all the great efforts made by the cadres and members of the commune, however, sparetime education made only limited and tottering progress. The ten years of the Cultural Revolution were years of devastation for sparetime education.

After the downfall of the "Gang of Four", what had been thrown into disorder was set to right again in the field of education. Sparetime education in Shanyang entered

upon a new phase in its development. The commune established a sparetime education commission, strengthened the set up for sparetime education, summed up experience and drew lessons from past work and worked out a new programme for the development of sparetime education. The teaching staff were reorganized, consolidated and augmented - now the commune has two full-time cadres for sparetime education, every brigade has a head of local teachers and every team has two local teachers. The entire commune has over 400 local teachers. To accomplish the task of anti-illiteracy at an earlier date the commune called on the young and middle-aged peasants knowing only few Chinese characters to set aside a period of time in 1978 for makeup lessons in literacy. In this year after the check and assessment by the county educational department it was acknowledged that after many setbacks the historic task of wiping out illiteracy was basically completed in Shanyang. With this achievement every brigade is running its own sparetime high primary classes so as to continue raising the commune members' educational level. At the same time the commune reorganized and consolidated its polytechnical school and started sparetime senior middle school courses and a junior middle school. Sparetime education in Shanyang has reached a new stage in its development.

2 Experience and lessons

The 30 years' sparetime education in Shanyang affords both experience gained from successes and lessons drawn from failures.

1. Sparetime education must base its objectives on the necessity arising from politics, production and everyday life and also on the possibility of their achievement. Disregard of necessity or possibility and indulgence in wishful thinking will lead to failure.

In the early years after the founding of the People's Republic, carrying out the general and specific policies and the working principles set forth by the Communist Party and the government sparetime education, which started from scratch, enjoyed steady and continuous development. That was possible because the sparetime schools at that time, in their sizes, forms, contents of teaching and teaching methods, all suited the actual needs of the social changes and development of production then taking place Winter classes were set up to meet the needs of consolidating the new People's Government and the urgent demand of the broad peasant masses, who had just been emancipated politically and become their own masters, to be emancipated culturally. The winter classes, where peasants were not only taught how to read and write but also told why the labouring people should be their own masters, enjoyed immense popularity among the peasants. The first lesson in a reader for winter classes, for example, ran as follows, "Red flags fly over the east village. Drums and gongs beat in the west. What are drums and gongs beating for? Because the land reform is completed. It is a happy event! An event that has never been known in history". The text gave a vivid description of a joyful scene in the villages after land reform and touched the hearts of the peasants who just had become masters of the land. This lesson, which not only taught peasants characters but also gave them political education, achieved ideal effects. When mutual-aid teams, co-operatives and people's communes were organized, large numbers of agrotechnic, administrative and financial personnel were needed. At that time sparetime schools continuously provided the new organizations with these personnel who were peasants with culture and the pressing need was met. To suit the need of collective production, the text-books used in sparetime schools at that time taught the characters referring to different types of farm work, farm tools and crops and also how to keep work-point and accounts, which was conducive to the assessment of the work done by members, calculation of workpoints and the democratic management of finance. As agrotechnique was extremely backward in China before the founding of the People's Republic, the peasants felt amazed and bewildered when chemical fertilizers, insecticides and farm machines were first introduced. Sparetime schools compiled supplementary

material to pass on knowledge about agrotechnique and agronomy, explaining the properties of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, the mechanism of farm machines and how to use them; and sometimes putting on demonstrations of operation. All these facts testify to the truth if in conformity with the development of political and economic situation sparetime education grows more and more flourishing.

In 1958 a "red-and-expert college", an "agricultural university" and a "drama institute" were set up regardless of the fact that neither the existing state of political and economic development nor the educational level of the general public afforded the required conditions. Undue emphasis was put on "high speed" and "high aims". For example, every illiterate person was required to learn to count in three days and achieve literacy in seven days. The result was that the learners, with their enthusiasm dampened, lost what confidence they had. Such practice violated the law of development of sparetime education and inflicted a serious setback on it. The "red-and-expert" college and other colleges were closed down in a few months and anti-illiteracy campaign, instead of being speeded up, was retarded.

2. Sparetime education being an undertaking of the masses themselves, the mass line must be followed and the masses mobilized; at the same time the leadership of sparetime education must be strengthened and specialized administration exercised.

After the founding of the People's Republic, the authorities in Shanyang followed the guiding principle established by the Central Government that "the government exercises the leadership, the mass organizations must be relied on and people in all circles must give co-operation" and persisted in the mass line so that the effective development of sparetime education was ensured. Sparetime education here started from scratch. The first problem to be tackled in the beginning was where to find the classrooms and the necessary equipment. As soon as the authorities called on the people for help, everybody suggested ways and means. Village head offices, even private homes were converted into classrooms; old temples and cowsheds were cleaned to be used as classrooms. Doors were used as makeshift blackboards. Desks and benches were made by peasants themselves from waste timber, or, in more cases, donated by peasants. As to the expenses on lighting, textbooks, exercise-books and pens, they were covered by the teachers and students themselves, or, sometimes, by the income earned in sideline production. The 30 students of the sparetime school in Donglu Brigade, for example, earned over 300 yuan in four years by making cords, catching fish and raising rabbits after farm work and used this income to cover the expenses of their sparetime school. In these harsh conditions, the peasants were enthusiastic about learning and sparetime education was flourishing. Along with the collective economy steadily strengthened after the establishment of co-operatives and the people's commune, conditions for running sparetime schools were also improved steadily. Now many schools have regular classrooms which are illuminated by electricity lights.

A large number of teachers were enlisted by relying on the masses. In the early days after the founding of the People's Republic there was a serious shortage of teachers. In Shanyang, which was then divided into six townships, only one regular teacher was assigned to each township, while there were altogether 60 sparetime schools in the six townships. Under these circumstances, a contingent of local teachers was built up by "people teaching people" and engaging part-time teachers. When winter classes and sparetime schools were initiated, village primary school teachers were called on to teach the peasants in the evenings and through them a number of local teachers were gradually selected and trained among those who attended sparetime schools. As a result of the development of education the number of graduates from primary and middle school is growing, and so is the contingent of local teachers, which now constitutes the main force in sparetime education, with regular teachers in the full-time schools giving them guidance in teaching. In the anti-illiteracy campaign many primary and middle school pupils acted as "little teachers". Organized by

their teachers they helped adults to learn the written language by going to the home of the illiterate person or forming "teacher-learner partnerships". There were many moving instances in which children taught parents, or younger brother or sister taught their elder. Now the Commune Sparetime Polytechnic School engaged, as part-time teachers, teachers from regular middle schools and the technical personnel in the commune tractor station, farm machinery factory and the commune hospital. Teachers in sparetime schools generally get no pay. In the early years after the founding of the People's Republic the primary school teachers and local teachers working in winter classes and sparetime schools, in response to the call of the government to eliminate illiteracy, felt themselves honoured and duty-bound to teach the written language to others. There emerged in large numbers excellent teachers who served the peasants enthusiastically as commune member Zhou Bo-ying, who had been the head local teacher in Dianjin Brigade for many years, had the cultural level of a lower primary school pupil and was among the first to attend winter classes. When he became a local teacher, he was always the first to come tidying up the classroom and getting things ready for class, and the last to leave correcting students' exercises. At day time he prepared lessons after farm work or called on students to gather their opinions on teaching. For years he did not visit relatives or friends so as to concentrate his sparetime on teaching. He even made long trips to classes when in illness. His wholehearted service of the people, without any thought to personal gains or losses, is deeply appreciated and admired by commune members, who respectfully call him "Teacher Zhou". Among other much respected local teachers who made contribution to sparetime education there are Weng You-Zhong the commune cadre in charge of sparetime education, Zhang Zheng-yu, Chinese teacher in the commune middle school, Shen Yong-chang, a secretary of the commune, Zhang Lai-jin, director of the commune farm machinery factory and Gu Di-hua, a production team accountant. In the thirty years since the founding of the People's Republic, a large number of local teachers who achieved remarkable results in their work have been assigned to new jobs by the local authorities. At present a new generation of local teachers are emerging; inheriting the glorious tradition of the old local teachers, they are making new contribution to sparetime education. As the government is allocating more funds for sparetime education and the collective economy of the people's commune is being strengthened, local teachers are paid moderate sums of subsidies or salary on the basis of the amount of their work. To those who do their work exceedingly well, moral encouragement and material awards are given to encourage them to work still better.

The implementation of the mass line should be ensured by the special organs under the leadership of the government. Since the founding of the People's Republic an administrative organ supervising sparetime education has been in existence at the district (now commune) and township (now production brigade) levels, and some full-time cadres have been assigned to these organs. At present under the leadership of the commune administrative committee, there is a sparetime education commission which is composed of two cadres in charge of agriculture, cadres from the Communist Youth League and Women's Association, the middle school principal and primary school headmaster and two full-time cadres in charge of sparetime education. This commission is in charge of sparetime education in the whole commune, making and implementing plans for running sparetime schools, selecting and training teachers, give teachers guidance in teaching, compiling supplementary teaching material, enrolling new students, starting new classes and conducting examinations. A corresponding organ is set up in every production brigade and commune-run enterprise and every production team has a cadre taking care of sparetime education. In this way leadership of sparetime education runs from the commune down to production teams, with cadres in charge of it at every level.

Conducting sparetime schools by relying on the masses is important experience gained from thirty years' practice. There have also been some lessons in this respect. In some brigades relying on the masses was mistaken for letting things drift by themselves. The leadership gave neither guidance nor support, nor did they help to solve

problems met in work. As a result people's enthusiasm could not be brought to full display and sparetime schools were set up in a haste and in disorder, which closed down before very long. There have also been some brigades which conducted sparetime education by issuing administrative decrees, without making any investigations, giving the matter any consideration, or heeding the opinions of the masses. Consequently the forms of teaching failed to suit people's needs and customs or to be feasible; teaching hours were fixed without any consideration of people's convenience and measures were enforced without flexibility or due consideration to individual cases. The consolidation and development of sparetime education in these brigades were thus unfavourably affected.

3. Follow the teaching in order, advance step by step and pay attention to the coherence of the knowledge that is passed on.

In the past thirty years sparetime education in Shanyang was conducted mainly in accordance with the special characteristics of the adults and the law governing education. That has resulted in gratifying results. The workload for teaching, however, was at times either too heavy or too light and the law governing the process of learning was violated. Anti-illiteracy in Shanyang dragged on for quite a period of time before its completion, because of, among other causes, the failure to organize in good time those who had just achieved literacy in further study and as a result part of them slipped back into illiteracy. Anti-illiteracy must go hand in hand with the setting up of sparetime primary and middle schools and polytechnical schools; otherwise "loss of knowledge" and "restoration of illiteracy" would be inevitable in a part of people.

The accumulation of knowledge is a gradual process, but the sparetime schools of different types in Shanyang are sometimes disjointed in their educational levels. When the sparetime polytechnical school was started in 1975, it used the coursebooks of regular polytechnical schools but students were enrolled without cultural examinations. Some students, who had only the educational level of primary school pupils, found the courses too difficult to understand and great difficulties arose in teaching.

4. Sparetime education and full-time schooling should be considered as a whole; overall planning and arrangements should be made.

For years owing to many political, economic and cultural factors, quite a number of children failed to finish primary schools as is required by the state. Consequently although anti-illiteracy was conducted year in and year out illiteracy was not wiped out altogether for many years and anti-illiteracy work had to drag on. Keeping this lesson in mind, the commune has made effort to integrate sparetime education with full-time schooling. As a result enrolment rate of school-age children has increased from 26.3 per cent in 1950 to the present 98.6 per cent and the emergence of new illiterates has been basically forestalled. While anti-illiteracy work must be integrated with the popularization of primary schooling, sparetime middle and primary school education and sparetime scientific and technical education must also be integrated with full-time schooling. Only by "walking on two legs" can education constantly advance. Now they are summing up experience and making overall planning and arrangements for schools of different kinds and at different levels, with a view to integrating sparetime education with formal education and pre-school education.

Encouraging Results

Sparetime education over the past 30 years in Shanyang has enhanced the cultural and scientific level of the peasants, speeded up the pace of its cultural construction and greatly promoted its production. The results are indeed very encouraging.

1. Illiteracy among youth and adults below 45 basically eliminated

Before liberation, educational departments in the KMT reactionary government also put forward the slogan of "anti-illiteracy". But that was only a gesture for the sake of appearance and for deceiving the people. Only after the establishment of the People's Government in 1949 the masses of workers and peasants did gain the right to culture and education. Over the past 30 years, while developing full-time school education in an extensive way, the government has conducted sparetime education relying on the masses. As a result, 6,484 youths and adults in Shanyang have been lifted out of illiteracy and 3,391 youths and adults, who had received a primary school education or a junior middle school education before, have respectively further raised their educational level. Consequently, Shanyang area has ended its history of illiteracy once and for all. The peasants who are free from illiteracy now happily say: "After liberation we got the land certificates and the elector's certificates. And now we've got the literacy certificates. We've indeed become our own masters in politics, economy and culture".

Yang Hulong, a cadre in the early days after liberation, could not read the name of his village before. But by attending the winter classes and evening school and carrying on self-study, he learned many Chinese characters. And after two months' study in the literacy class run for commune cadres in 1961, the number of characters he learned increased from 700 to 1,800, enabling him to throw off illiteracy. In 1966, he was transferred to work in the schistosomiasis prevention group in the commune hospital. Through self-study in his sparetime, he gradually found out the habits and characteristics of oncomelania, learned the history of schistosomiasis and acquired the knowledge for its prevention and treatment. Although an entire layman before, now he became a specialist in this field. Later, he also attended the class sponsored by the county in the prevention and treatment of schistosomiasis, where he assiduously studied many medical works, including "Medical Statistics", "Epidemiology" and Parasitology", and passed three examinations with excellent results. Upon graduation, he attained the level of a full-time vocational school graduate.

Lin Yaping, a woman member of Nijia Village, never had the opportunity of going to school in her childhood. When she was 14, there was set up an evening school in the village. She became the first girl in the village enrolled in the school, ignoring the time-honoured practice among the local women of never going out at night. Busy as she was after becoming a woman cadre in 1959, she never slackened her efforts in sparetime study. When she was a student in the cadres' literacy class, she persisted in studying 10 hours every day. After 40 days of hard study, the number of characters she learned increased to more than 2,000. After graduating from the class, she went on with her study by reading newspapers and magazines in spare time. Now she cannot only read newspapers and materials relating to agricultural technology but also keep minutes of meetings and write simple work reports.

With the elimination of illiteracy, great changes have taken place in the cultural life in this area and a new atmosphere of loving culture and science and being keen to learn has begun to prevail.

Before liberation, there were only a few bookstores in the towns and only a few primary schools subscribed to newspapers. In the whole area there was not a single library or reading-room and only a few literate persons kept some books. But now the total number of newspapers subscribed to by the commune and its members reaches 3,817 while the number of magazines and periodicals reaches 1,878. In addition to the commune-owned library, each brigade, factory and school has a library of its own, with a total collection of more than 40,000 books.

2. The level of social civilization enhanced

With the rise of educational level, the peasants have widened their scope of knowledge and deep changes have taken place in their outlook.

1. Gods and devils replaced by science

Though sparetime education, the peasants have come to understand many natural phenomena which they could not understand before, such as the rain, the wind, the thunder and lightning and the meteors. They are now also able to make a scientific explanation of many social phenomena, such as the rise and decline of nations, the birth and death of human beings and the cause of some people being rich while some others being poor. Having discovered the secrets of fortune-telling, divination and sorcery, the peasants no longer believe in gods, angels, devils and spirits. Those who made a living by practising religious activities and superstitions in old society now have learned new trades and earn their living by taking part in labour. Xie Jienxin, who used to be a fortune teller before, acquired a materialist outlook through sparetime education after liberation. He not only gave up fortune-telling but also revealed the deceptive nature of fortune-telling to the peasants by suing his own experience as an example. As a result of hard study and hard work, he has now become the accountant of the farm-machine building factory of the commune. Through study of science, the broad masses of peasants have cast off the shackle of old traditions and become rather keen to learn new things. New techniques therefore can be quickly applied and spread in production now. Whenever they catch a disease, they would no longer resort to gods and buddhas as they did before but go to doctors for medical treatment.

2. Old concepts replaced by new morality

As a result of education on patriotism and collectivism carried on by sparetime schools, new socialist concepts of loving the country and the people, loving science and labour and cherishing public property are gradually taking shape. It is now a common practice among the peasants to observe disciplines, behave politely, cherish unity and help each other. And there have emerged a great number of exemplary persons and exemplary deeds in these respects.

Since 1972, Hu Mingbao, a woman member of Dongfang Brigade, has been voluntarily looking after Aqin, a disabled single old woman provided for entirely by the commune. Although she lives one li away from Aqin's home and has no kinship to her, motivated by humanitarian spirit, Hu Ming-bao has shown great solicitude for her. She has been cooking meals and cleaning the house for her for eight years without a single day's interruption, disregarding rain and wind, the hot weather in summer and the bitter cold in winter.

3. Old customs replaced by new ones

Through sparetime education, the broad masses of peasants have cultivated anti-feudalistic and democratic concepts and acquired much knowledge concerning civilized life. Great changes have taken place in their customs and their way of life.

A relationship of equality has been built among the people and the old idea of regarding men superior to women has been wiped out. The youths have gained the right to freedom of love and marriage; and the old custom of marriage been arranged arbitrarily by parents and matchmakers has been done away with. Family planning has become a common practice and many families have only one child. Weddings and funerals are no longer arranged in the old feudalistic way but in accordance with new socialist customs. Most people have adopted hygienic habits and the infectious diseases which used to play havoc with the local people before, such as schistosomiasis, meningitis and malaria, have been basically eliminated.

Sports have always been very popular over the past years among the peasants in the commune. There are now altogether 9 amateur sport teams in the commune, including the teams of table tennis, volleyball, Chinese chess, shooting, martial arts, etc. Persisting in training and often participating in matches and competitions, these amateur athletes have played a very important role in promoting sports among the peasant masses. All the brigades and enterprises in the commune often organize sport activities, such as setting up exercises to radio music, swimming, tug-of-wars, ball games, shooting, martial arts and Chinese shadow boxing. Thanks to the frequent patriotic health campaigns and sport activities, the health of the peasants has been greatly improved.

3. Training of the administrative cadres and undertakings of the commune

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, owing to the institution of the land reform and the establishment of agricultural co-ops, a large number of administrative cadres were badly needed. Since most of the peasants remained illiterate, some students in winter classes and evening schools who were ideologically sound and good at study were then chosen to be leading cadres or accountants. They not only played an important role at the time but also constituted in later periods the main force in the administrative work of the commune.

Yu Jinfa, an illiterate before but an accountant now, reached school-age before liberation. However, his parents were too poor to send him to school at that time. He was 18 when Shanyang was liberated. With a strong desire to learn, he then went to a primary school with some other youths in the village. However, being the mainstay of his family, which was still financially hard up, he had to take part in farm work at daytime. So before he had studied for more than 33 days in the school, he had to quit. Later he entered a sparetime school. After 4 years of hard study, he threw off illiteracy.

Then in the winter of 1955, right after he threw off illiteracy, he filled the post of accountant in the co-op in Huangsha Village. When the people's commune was set up, be became the accountant of a brigade. In recent years, he has been concurrently the accountant of the dairy and the fishing ground of the commune. Throwing off illiteracy just a short time ago, he was bound to meet with many difficulties in his accounting work at the beginning. However, while carrying on self-study in accounting, he took lessons in the accounting class in the county town and learned to use the abacus with the help of some experienced accountants, using their account books as his text-books. As a result, he has now become a very competent accountant, familiar with the characteristics of the management of local agricultural and sideline production and able to keep accounts skilfully and correctly. For many years running, he has never made any serious errors in his work.

1. Technical backbone trained

Sparetime education has disseminated technical knowledge and promoted scientific experiments in close connection with local agricultural, sideline and industrial production. Many sparetime schools have their own "experimental plots" where they make experiments to gain new experience. The sparetime school in Qienjin Brigade carried out an experiment in the cultivation of paddy rice and rape seeds with the result that the per mu yield of rice that year on the plot exceeded 1,000 jin, topping the previous record of the area. This achievement eloquently refuted the view of "production has reached its limit", afforded new experience and encourages the local peasants to further widen the range and improve the quality of production.

Sparetime education has also trained a large number of technical personnel who have played a key role in production. Within the 5 years from 1975-1979, the sparetime technical school trained 604 technical personnel of the level of junior technicians for enterprises run either by the commune or the brigade, averaging 20 for each brigade. Meanwhile, it has trained 1,221 farm-machine operators and stockmen, averaging 30 for each brigade. Cheng Zhongyao, now deputy director of the County Agricultural Science Research Institute, used to be a semi-illiterate in Maqiao Village. In the winter of 1950, the second year after liberation, he attended the peasants' evening school in the village. Through industrious study, he made rapid progress and was appraised as an activist in study. In 1951, he became a teacher in the school. While teaching, he persisted in self-study and enhanced his cultural level rapidly.

After acquiring a sound rudimentary knowledge, he then concentrated himself on the study of agrotechnology. When at the post of production assistant in the Tingxing People's Commune, he subscribed to many magazines and bought many books relating to agrotechnology, which he studied perseveringly. As a result, he incessantly enriched his theoretical knowledge about agricultural science and efficiently applied it to production. In order to find out the laws of the growth of various kinds of crops, he has carried out over the past years a number of experiments in their breeding, cultivation and protection. By working out a set of new methods, he successfully solved the old problem of "slow blossoming at an early stage, unsteady growth at middle stage and premature withering at a late stage" and realized a big increase from 90 jin to more than 160 jin in the per mu output of ginned cotton.

2. A great number of medical, cultural and educational workers trained

Out of the total 91 medical workers in the commune, there are 68 barefoot doctors who are trained through sparetime education. They are distributed in 19 brigades and 6 enterprises, playing a rather important role in the prevention and treatment of many common ailments and frequently occurring diseases. Take the treatment of schistosomiasis for example. Out of the 1,645 cases cured in the past 5 years, 1,528 were treated by barefoot doctors, making up a 93 per cent.

Sparetime education has also trained a great number of amateur cultural and art workers for the development of culture and arts in the local area. They include actors and actresses, writers, newspaper correspondents, etc. Over the past years they have created many literary and artistic works very popular with the peasant masses. Most of them are terse and vivid, well suiting the taste of the peasants with a strong local colour. And many of them have been published in Shanghai or in some national newspapers and magazines. Some have even been made into cartoons or telefilms.

Among these amateur cultural and art workers, Shang Daoyu, now a well-known peasant writer, is worth special attention. After completing primary school, he passed the entrance examination of a well-known middle school in Shanghai. However, since his family was still somewhat hard up, instead of going to the school, he had to stay in his village to do farm work. When a part-work-and-part-study middle school was set up in the commune, he enrolled himself in it. After studying there for more than one year, he came back to his village, where he became a teacher in the village's sparetime school and joined the performing arts propaganda team. Teaching in the sparetime school, he had more opportunities to get into contact with different people in society. This provided a wide range of subjects for his literary writing and developed his imaginative power. In his spare time, he wrote many poems, prose, plays, etc. He often read his stories to the peasants and wrote short plays for the propaganda team to perform. And his students greatly encouraged him in his literary efforts by often making suggestions for him to improve his works. They were regarded

by him as his "mass teachers" in his literary work. It was here in the sparetime school that he first told the story and worked out the rough draft of his maiden work "The Glib-tongued Go-between". As he went along with his work, he often read to his students what he had written and then would revise it and improve it according to their suggestions and opinions. After he worked out the draft, he went to tell the story to audiences in the brigade, the commune, the county town and Shanghai as well. Every time he had told it, he would collect opinions and suggestions from among the audience and then make revisions accordingly. As a result, the story was incessantly improved in quality and finally published in one of the major literary magazines in Shanghai.

With the publication of "The Glib-tongued Go-between", Zhang Daoyu was brought to the attention of the literary circles of the county and Shanghai. People from the Cultural Centre of Jinshan County, the Mass Arts Centre of Shanghai, the Folk Literature Research Society of Shanghai and the Literature and Arts Publishing House of Shanghai often got into contact with him and invited him to attend various kinds of literary classes, lectures and reports and story-telling performances. Sometimes they would also go to his home to give him some specific coaching. With the help of these specialists, he gradually learned the essential writing techniques. And by repeatedly applying these techniques in practice, he has grown more mature in his literary writing. While receiving the coaching of these specialists, he has persisted in his self-study, reading not only many literary works, such as Chinese classics, modern works by Lu Xun and other famous writers and foreign classical works, but also many theoretical works on literature and arts. He has also subscribed to many literary magazines and periodicals which he reads with a view to enriching his knowledge and improving his artistic accomplishments.

Over the past more than ten years, Zhang Daoyu has written more than a million words of literary works. His novel "The Raging Sea" and three short stories, which include the popular "The Glib-tongued Go-between", have been published abroad in more than 20 languages. In 1979, he was admitted into the Shanghai Branch of the Chinese Folk Literature Research Society.

A Broad Vista

The development of education in a certain area is bound to be closely connected with the development of its political and economic situation. In the next two decades, the Shanyang Commune will modernize the means, technology and management of its production. Farm work which is done by manpower or animal power now will then be electrified and mechanized. Its agricultural productivity will be increased to an unprecedented height by replacing backward and conservative farming methods with advanced agricultural science and technology. The whole area of Shanyang, which is still rather backward and impoverished now, will become by that time a new and comparatively rich place with a diversified economy comprising agriculture, industry, side-line occupation and commerce, a beautiful natural environment and advanced science and technology.

To obtain this goal and realize the modernization of agriculture, it is imperative to train a large number of both red and expert agrotechnical personnel in various fields and a large number of cadres who know how to manage socialist modern agricultural production. It is also imperative to raise the educational, scientific and technical level of the broad masses of peasants.

To accomplish the modernization programme, the state sets an ever more arduous task before sparetime education while continuing to develop full-time school education to train more qualified workers in various fields.

In the next two decades, the scope of sparetime education in Shanyang area will be continuously expanded and its forms will become more varied. In the latter half of 1980, a sparetime school with various special courses will be built in the town of Shanyang to train for the brigades teachers and agricultural personnel with a qualification equal to that of full-time vocational school graduates. This school is planned to be the base in the commune for the development of cultural and technical education. And each brigade will set up a centre where its cadres and members can attend sparetime classes so as to raise their cultural, scientific and technical level.

In the next 5 years (1980-1985), each brigade will set up a sparetime primary school to admit those youths who have had a lower primary schooling but failed to have a higher primary schooling so as to enable all the 4,337 youths aged from 16-25 to attain the level of higher primary school graduates. While the commune continues to run well its sparetime technical school offering courses in farm machinery, plant protection, crop breeding, agrotechnology and animal husbandry for brigade and team cadres and junior in-service technical personnel, each brigade will step by step start agrotechnical classes to train plant protectors, crop breeders and farm-machine operators. Brigades and enterprises with favourable conditions will also jointly set up sparetime middle schools to admit those young peasants who have attained primary schooling. Besides, the commune will also run some irregular classes in general knowledge for the office workers of the commune and cadres of the production brigades and production teams. After 1985, when elementary education will have been made universal throughout the commune, each brigade will set up a sparetime middle school of its own to admit those young peasants who took part in farm work right after graduating from the primary school. The sparetime technical school run by the commune will be developed into a sparetime agricultural vocational school with a higher level. And the brigades will also jointly set up some sparetime agrotechnical schools. By the year of 2000, every youth in the commune will have attained the level of full-time junior middle school graduates. Besides, the commune will also further develop its agricultural science research institutions to train more research workers. Towards 1999, all the more than 200 leaders of production brigades and production teams and the agrotechnical personnel in various fields will have gone through a special course in the sparetime technical school group by group and attained the level of full-time vocational school graduates, forming a considerably large contingent of agrotechnical personnel.

To guarantee the fulfilment of this educational programme, in addition to the funds provided by the state, the commune and brigades will also allot a certain amount of funds for school building, equipment, books and reference materials, television sets and correspondence courses. Graduates from the commune-run sparetime agricultural vocational school and brigade-run sparetime technical schools will be assigned to work in a planned way according to the results of examinations. Grades and positions of people working in offices and enterprises under the commune will be determined according to their records in the sparetime schools. Students who have achieved fine results and shown outstanding ability in the sparetime schools will be chosen to take on administrative or technical posts in various departments of the commune. With the incessant development of modern construction, the demand for science and culture will surely become more and more urgent and the enthusiasm for study of the peasants will surely continuously increase. This in turn is bound to stimulate a more rapid development of sparetime education.

Reviewing our past experience and looking forward to the future in the way of sparetime education, we believe with more certainty that sparetime education represents an indispensable and essential component part in the educational system of our country. It has indeed a bright and boundless future.